

was delivered, he stands as a typical representative of the prophets.

Moreover, they had to do with the common duties of life. Their business was to rebuke the wickedness of king and people, and to declare that wickedness in either meant destruction to the nation. In doing this of course they spoke, but only as they or others recorded their words are we able to know them today.

Perhaps no part of the Bible is so little read today, or if read, with so little understanding, as the prophets. Yet, there are no portions of the Word which savors more of the gospels than they. Their burning words and pleading wooings are a fortaste of Jesus' messages of denunciation against the sinful Jews and of his sweet gentleness to repentant sinners. Their ecstatic pictures of a redeemed Israel are a hint of the splendid pictures of John at Patmos. Their delineations of the coming doom of sinful nations are among the most telling declarations of God against sin, equalled only by the words of Jesus. Their revelations of the relations of God to His people are surpassed only by the Incarnate Word, Jesus Christ.

Sympathetic with the burdens and temptations of the people, as no scribe or other teacher ever was, they insisted on righteousness towards God and fellow men in church, state or private life as no mere priest or legal functionary ever dreamed of doing. Loving the people with an intensity that forgot self and its interests, they leaped upon the people's sins with such vehemence as no one ever exhibited upon whom God's hand did not rest with divine compulsion. At enmity, generally, with the king and misunderstood by the people they were in fact the truest friends of both. As messengers of God they were privileged with his friendship and intrusted with His secrets, and saw visions both of sorrow and joy,—of a people captive because of sin, of a nation restored by God's love and peace. But these were the visions that oftentimes cost them their lives. Weeping with almost divine solicitude over an apostate people they were counted by that same people as their chief enemies. The uncompromising enemies of the present good, and the visionary, unpractical preachers of a theoretical better,—such was their status in the estimation of the people to whom they were sent with life-giving messages. With a passion for righteousness that was deterred from its pursuit by no friendships, however close, by no majesty of kingship, if it were evil, and by no fear of death, however terrible might be its form, they united a sympathy for the oppressed and poor that made them the uncompromising enemies of iniquity and the most redoubtable champions of despised truth. The bearers of messages of direct calamity to a sinful nation, they were the most decided optimists of the world.

While seers of other nations were for money giving out ambiguous prophecies from their oracles, these Hebrew prophets in the face of the most imposing opposition,

and at the cost of the most strenuous self-denial were preaching a righteous moral government of this world by one just God, with immortal faith and heroic martyrdom.

SERMONS IN QUAIN TEXTS

BY THE EDITOR

Text: He could there do no mighty work. Mark 6: 5.

Is there anything Christ can not do? What can hinder him from working? Is there anything too hard for the Lord to do? Yet here it is said that Christ could do no mighty works, not that he *would* not but that he *could* not. We have seen Jesus in the sick room, but he rebuked disease and the sick were made whole. We have seen him in the presence of the blind, the deaf and the dumb, but these could not hinder him from working, for at his command the eyes of the blind were opened, the deaf were made to hear and speech came to the dumb. We have seen the Master in the presence of the dead, but at his almighty call the grave gave up its tenant. What was it that Jesus could not do, and what is it that he can not even now do? With him all things are possible, the very laws of nature are obedient to his will.

It is expressly stated here by the evangelist that Christ could not do a mighty work at a certain place. Mark does not tell us why it was that he could not, but Matthew gives us the reason. It was "because of unbelief." Here is the hindering cause. In the face of unbelief Christ can not accomplish much. He came to Nazareth, his old home because he loved those people as he did all others. He went there to do them good. He had nothing but blessings for them. There were sick people there who needed healing. There were those possessed of devils who had need of being freed from Satan's terrible power. There were blind eyes waiting to be opened, deaf ears to be unstopped and tongues to be loosed. Above all there were sinners who had need of salvation. Christ came to bring these blessings to Nazareth, but there was one thing that hindered him from bestowing the blessings and that one thing was *unbelief*. Christ can do us no good when unbelief locks the door of the heart. We must have faith in him and open our hearts to him if we would have him come in and fill our lives with the rich blessings he came to bestow. It is unbelief today that hinders Christ from doing the mighty works for which faith opens the way. There is a mighty power in human unbelief, it thwarts God's purposes and stops the free flow of his blessings into the life of humanity. O, what mighty works Christ would do today if only we had the faith necessary to call forth his power. If faith overcomes the world, then it is true also that the world overcomes by the opposite of faith, that is unbelief. Satan's mightiest weapon is unbelief. If he can keep people from *believing* he need not fear that Christ will destroy any of his works. The *will* is a tremendous power in human action. Unless it yields to the appeals of

heaven God himself stands powerless before it. Before unbelieving Jerusalem, the people who *would* not have salvation, Christ can but stand with a yearning heart and shed tears. Unbelief closes the door to all the rich blessings which Christ has in store for those who believe. Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ calls forth his divinest power, his sweetest blessings, the richest things of heaven. Wherever he finds faith on the earth there he sends his angels laden with heaven's richest gifts, yea, he goes there himself and pours into that soul his own precious life. Christ has often come to you personally with heaven's choicest blessings, but unbelief has driven him away. He has been to your home desiring to leave there the blessed sunshine of a happy life in Jesus, but unbelief has turned him away. He has been in your community bringing with him healing and pardon and peace and hope and comfort, but as at Nazareth of old he could there do no mighty works because of unbelief. O, for a larger faith in the Christ of God. Then indeed would heaven open to us and all the good things of God's own home come down to us, yea, Jesus himself would come and abide with us. May he thus come in response to our faith.

The Mission Field

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WASHINGTON CITY ECHOES

"Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house . . . preaching the kingdom of God."

Brother Shaver did not prove himself *apostolic* as to time; he felt that one week was quite long enough under the circumstances; to teach and preach in a private dwelling house does not prove very inspiring to many of us and Brother Shaver seems to be no exception to the rule. However the